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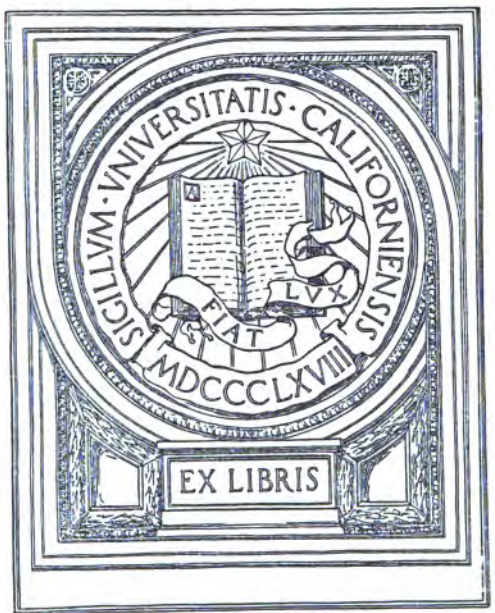
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TRADITIONARY ANECDOTES

OF

SHAKESPEARE.

COLLECTED IN WARWICKSHIRE,

IN THE YEAR MDCXCIII.

John Dowdall

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

LONDON:

THOMAS RODD, GREAT NEWPORT STREET,

MDCCCXXXVIII.

UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA

STEVENS AND PARDON, PRINTERS, BELL YARD, TEMPLE BAR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Letter, which is now for the first time printed, came into the hands of the publisher upon the dispersion of the papers of the family of Lord De Clifford, which were sold by auction in the year 1834.

It is addressed to Mr. Edward Southwell, and is endorsed by him "From Mr. Dowdall, Description of several places in Warwickshire." From the signature at the end, and several legal phrases that occur in the letter, there can be no doubt that the writer was an Inn's-of-Court man; and a search into the registers of those societies will probably determine to which of them he belonged.

The mention that is made of Shakespeare in the letter, has led to its being printed—for brief as the notice of the poet is, it is nevertheless of great curiosity and importance, since it appears to indicate the source of much of the information which has been handed down to us by Aubrey; and to point out one of the persons who have invented, or perpetuated, the few anecdotes of his early life that have reached us.

Aubrey, according to Malone, collected his memorials of Shakespeare about the year 1680; and from the coincidence of the anecdotes he has given of him, with those recorded by Mr. Dowdall, there can be no doubt that both received them from the same individual, viz. the old clerk who is mentioned in the following letter. To him, therefore, we are indebted for the story of Shakespeare's being apprenticed to a butcher, and of his running away to London; and, whatever value may be attached to such evidence by others, the publisher is unwilling to let the present opportunity pass without expressing his conviction that the reports of the vagrant tenor of the early part of the poet's life are no more entitled to credit than the later fables which, in the absence of facts, have been thrust into the biographical accounts of Shakespeare. Indeed it would appear from the practice of some recent writers, that where the great dramatist is the subject, each conceives himself at liberty to add whatever his

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fancy may dictate to those already apocryphal accounts of him. Every real or supposed allusion to him by his contemporaries, every line in his own works that could by ingenuity be applied to himself, his history, and his creed, have been eagerly caught at, adduced as evidence, and commented on; and the most monstrous conjectures respecting him have been boldly advanced, many of them at total variance with each other.

Thus, in addition to the old story of his stealing deer from a park,* which did not exist as such at the time, we

* Malone has successfully proved that Charlecote, the park of Sir Thomas Lucy, whence Shakespeare is said to have stolen deer, did not exist as a park in the poet's time. The Lucys, determined not to lose the honour of being robbed by the poet, have since shifted the locality. The story is one which has grown upon belief, from having a locality attached to it, as the visiting the scene of an event, whether real or imaginary, by impressing the reality of it on the mind, hallows the deception, till even the most incredulous yield to the delusion. A striking and most amusing illustration of this is afforded in the Life of Sir Walter Scott, recently published. Sir Walter, on his last journey to London, made a detour to Charlecote. On his return to Scotland, he visited Carlisle Castle, where he was shown the very dungeon where his own imaginary hero, Fergus Mac Ivor, had been confined. We subjoin the extracts for the amusement of the reader:—

"April 8, [1828]. Learning from Washington Irving's description of Stratford, that the hall of Sir Thomas Lucy, the justice who rendered Warwickshire too hot for Shakespeare, was still extant, we went in quest of it.

"Charlecote is in high preservation, and inhabited by Mr. Lucy, descendant of the worshipful Sir Thomas. The hall is about 300 years old, a brick mansion with a gate-house in advance. It is surrounded by venerable oaks, realizing the imagery which Shakespeare loved to dwell upon; rich verdant pastures extend on every side, and numerous herds of deer were reposing in the shade. All showed that the Lucy family had retained their 'land and beeves.' While we were surveying the antlered old hall, with its painted glass and family pictures, Mr. Lucy came to welcome us in person, and to show the house, with the collection of paintings, which seems valuable.

"He told me the park from which Shakespeare stole the buck, was not that which surrounds Charlecote, but belonged to a mansion at some distance, where Sir Thomas Lucy resided at the time of the trespass. The tradition went that they hid the buck in a barn, part of which was standing a few years ago, but now totally decayed. This park no longer belongs to the Lucys. The house bears no marks of decay, but seems the abode of ease and opulence. There were some fine old books, and I was told of many more which were not in order. How odd if a folio Shakespeare should be found amongst them! Our early breakfast did not permit taking advantage of an excellent repast offered by the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Lucy, the last a lively Welshwoman. This visit gave me great pleasure; it really brought Justice Shallow freshly before my eyes;—the *luces* 'which do become an old

are called on to believe that he who laid the foundation of his fortune by (if he did not owe it entirely to) acting, was an indifferent actor; and from a line in his sonnets it has been surmised that he was lame, which would have incapacitated him from acting at all,* and is contrary to the evidence of Aubrey, who has described him as a well-made and graceful man. In his Macbeth, and Henry the Eighth, he has left us complete evidence of his being a Protestant; yet, because there are in his Hamlet some allusions to the rites of the Roman church, he has been set down as a Catholic, and this latter surmise has so far gained credit as to lead some writers of that communion to triumph on the subject, and to urge it as a conclusive argument that genius is incompatible with Protestantism.

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coat well,' were not more plainly pourtrayed in his own armorials in the hall window, than was his person in my mind's eye. There is a picture shown as that of the old Sir Thomas, but Mr. Lucy conjectures it represents his son. There were three descents of the same name of Thomas. The portrait hath 'the eye severe and beard of formal cut,' which fill up with judicial austerity the otherwise social physiognomy of the worshipful presence, with his 'fair round belly, with good capon lined.'"—*Scott's Diary—Life*, vol. vii., p. 123.

"After that we went to the Castle [of Carlisle], where a new showman went through the old trick of pointing out Fergus Mac Ivor's *very* dungeon. Peveril said, 'Indeed? Are you quite sure, Sir?' And on being told there could be no doubt, was troubled with a fit of coughing, which ended in a laugh. The man seemed exceeding indignant: so when papa moved on, I whispered who it was. I wish you had seen the man's start, and how he stared and bowed as he parted from us; and then rammed his keys into his pocket, and went off at a hand-gallop to warn the rest of the garrison. But the carriage was ready, and we escaped a row."—*Letter from Miss Scott to Mrs. Lockhart, n. d. except* 1828—*Life*, vol. vii., p. 144.

* Mr. Collier's researches prove that Shakespeare was in London, possessed of property in the theatre in 1589, when he was aged twenty-five. As he is not mentioned or alluded to as a writer till 1592, it is evident that he must have derived his living from his acting only. The belief of his being an indifferent actor has been propagated from mistaking what Aubrey has said on the subject, of the top of his performance being the ghost in his own Hamlet. Aubrey, however, by no means states this as disparaging his acting, in which sense it has been taken. The character of the ghost as intended by the poet, is one that requires more particularly an actor of a commanding and noble presence. He is represented as being "majestical" and "like a king," and is also in complete armour. How does this accord with the supposed lameness of his histrionic representative? The spectators of the play had been used to the sight of Essex, of Raleigh, of Cumberland, and other of the prime gentlemen soldiers of the age in panoply, and to have introduced to them a lame man as the representive of a king "in fair and warlike form," and with "martial stalk," would have been the height of burlesque.

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the valley, are regular walks of lime, chesnut, and walnut trees: in the extreme parts of this are two noble fish-ponds, and a very large dove-house, from whence we are, as often as we please, plentifully furnished with creatures of both elements, of water and air. The gardens, orchards, meadows, and pasture are suitable: apples and pears are here still as delicious as in the month of August, of which we have (since the last year) good store remaining. The house is large enough for its demesnes, being an ancient, strong-built piece of architecture, with all the convenience of our modern buildings. To comfort and solace ourselves, we have all those necessaries that beautify and adorn the kitchen and cellar; and in the stables there be as stately a number of horses as a man can wish or desire to ride on.

Having come so far, I may now venture to inform you of our advances abroad; and in order to that, I must acquaint you first that there is a *knott* in these parts that meet at Kineton every Saturday in the afternoon, who are *one and all*, of which number my friend is one; and they are as true and sincere as they are generous and hospitable.

The first I shall name shall be Charles Newsham of Chadshunt, an ancient justice of the peace (tho' but fifty-eight years old), one that is every way a complete gentleman. He is an excellent scholar, and as good an historian; he is a

great admirer of your Royal-Society-learning, but not to be infatuated with the itch of experimental discoveries, &c.; but above all, he has made the reasons of our municipal laws his own, especially that part which relates and appertains to the crown-side; with whose conversation you may imagine I take no small delight. In short he has so clear an insight, so quick an apprehension, and so solid a judgment, that one would have thought he practised never any other thing but law, and [had] been all his life employed in antiquities, &c. This gentleman lives within two miles of us, having a paternal estate of 1,000*l.* per annum, besides a large addition by his own industry, &c.

The next is one Mr. Peeres, of an ancient family in this county, whose estate is 800*l.* per annum. He lives at his manor of Alveston, lying on the banks of the river Avon, within five miles of this place; he married one of the above Mr. Newsham's daughters. He has a very fine house built lately, &c.

Another of the fraternity is Justice Bentley, an honest true-hearted gentleman. He is very fat and very rich, having an inheritance of 1,300*l.* per annum, besides a vast personal estate, especially in money. He has *one* wife, *one* only *son*, and *one* maiden daughter of the age of twenty-four. He lives at Kineton, within *one* mile of us. This is he that told me the story of the *Buff Gloves*.

A fourth is Mr. Loggins, a near neighbour of ours. He has a pretty estate of 700*l.* per annum, all con-

tiguous about his house; he is excellent company, and keeps as excellent cyder.

To these I may add my friend and his father, whose characters I dare not take upon me to describe, fearing lest I should come short of their merit: but thus much I may say of them, that that which makes even poverty comfortable they enjoy with plenty, and that is, *unity* and *concord* at home; and to add to their happiness, they have two handsome prattling boys, each as pretty as Phillis, but not quite so old. They are in coats, and yet are in their grammars. And now I think of these children, pray speak to my cousin Betty (who knows the art of pleasing) to do me the favour to buy some little odd thing or other to present them with. She shall be paid as soon as I come to London, with a million of thanks.

From all these gentlemen I have had particular invitations, at whose respective houses I have received so many favours, and so much obliging civility, that are sufficient to bind my gratitude to a perpetual remembrance and acknowledgment; and as a mark of their kindness and esteem, they have admitted me of their society. And thus you may observe that a man may be excluded from one body politic, and immediately incorporated into another; and in truth 'tis but justice that a man return without complaint what he received gratis, *and all that.*

Now I proceed to inform you what antiquities I have observed, and now and then, if I should prove

tedious by telling stories relating to these matters, you will, I hope, excuse it, for 'tis what I thought worthy my remembrance, and by consequence my friends.'

The first remarkable place in this county that I visited, was Stratford-super-Avon, where I saw the effigies of our English tragedian, Mr. Shakspeare: part of his epitaph I sent Mr. Lowther, and desired he would impart it to you, which I find by his last letter he has done; but here I send you the whole inscription.

Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,
Terra tegit, populus mæret, olympus habet.
Stay, passenger, why goest thou by so fast;
Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath plac't
Within this monument, Shakespeare, with whome
Quick nature dyed, whose name doth deck this tomb
Far more than cost, sith all that he hath writt
Leaves living art but page to serve his witt.
Obijt A. Dñi 1616.
Ætat. 53, Die. 23. Apr. 1616.

Near the wall, where his monument is erected, lieth a plain freestone, underneath which his body is buried with this epitaph made by himself a little before his death :—

Good friend, for Jesus sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones.

The clerk that showed me this church was above eighty years old. He says that this Shakespeare

was formerly in this town bound apprentice to a butcher, but that he ran from his master to London, and there was received into the play-house as a servitour, and by this means had an opportunity to be what he afterwards proved. He was the best of his family; but the male line is extinguished. Not one, for fear of the curse abovesaid, dare touch his grave-stone, tho' his wife and daughters did earnestly desire to be laid in the same grave with him.

There are other stately monuments in this church, as the monument of George Carew, Earl of Totness, who was a considerable man in Ireland in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and also in the time of King James, both there and in England. He died tempor. Car. I. His brave actions and titles of honour are here upon his monument enumerated, which are too tedious to be here inserted. There is also the monument of the Cloptons here, who are an ancient family: there are some of them still remaining in this town.

I shan't trouble you any more in this place, but my next stage shall be to the church of Warwicke, which, for its multitude of many fair and stately monuments, will afford matter enough to feed the most hungry pen in Europe for a considerable time. But my curiosity shall terminate in a slender account of a few of them.

The first I shall begin with shall be the monument of Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and

the Lady Katherine Mortimer his wife, daughter to Roger Mortimer, first Earl of March, made by King Edward III. Here the statues of him and his countess are excellently cut in white marble. They both died in one year, viz. in the forty-third of Edward III. He dying at Calais in France, and being brought to this church, was enterred with his said lady. This Thomas Beauchamp was as eminent for his public service as any one of his line; he accompanied King Edward 3rd in the twentieth of his reign into France, and was one of the principal commanders that, with the Black Prince, led the van of his army in that famous battle of Crescy, where the English gained such immortal honour. In the 29 Ed. 3d, he attended the Prince of Wales into France, where, in a little time, the memorable battle of Poictiers happened, in which the King of France was taken prisoner, and in this also the noble earl gained a lasting renown, for he by his own hands took that day Will. de Melleun, Archbishop of Seinz, and many other prisoners of note. This earl was one of the founders of the noble Order of the Garter, instituted by King Edward the Third. These and many other extraordinary things may be related of this nobleman; but this taste shall suffice, and being subjects of general discourse, I thought not impertinent to send you.

The next I came to was the monument of Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, (son to the aforesaid Thomas,) and Margaret his wife, daughter to the

Lord Ferrers of Groby: he died anno 1401, anno 2 Henry IV. They lie under a fair monument of marble, with this inscription upon it:—

"Hic jacent Dominus Thomas de Bello Campo quondam Comes Warwici qui obiit octavi die mensis Aprilis Anno Domini, Millessimo. CCCC. primo, et Domina Margeretta quondam Comitissa Warwici qui obiit xxii mensis januarii Año Domini Millessimo CCCC. sexto: quorum animabus propicietur Deus. Amen."

This Earl, for his great wisdom and prudence, was by the parliament, an° 3 R. II, chosen governor to the king, then but young; but he was ill rewarded by that unhappy prince, for when he got the government into his own hands, he had him attainted for high treason; but he granted him his life in exchange of a perpetual banishment to the Isle of Man, &c. But this cloud was presently dissipated by the advancement of Henry the Fourth to the crown, and thereby this noble earl restored to his liberty, honours and possessions.

I made my next step to the monument of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, son to the last mentioned Earl Thomas: he died at Roan, anno 1439, and lies buried in a vault here; in memory of whom stands the noblest monument that ever my eyes beheld; 'tis in my judgment, much beyond Henry the seventh's. His statue in brass, double gilt, is the most exact and lively representation that hitherto I ere met with. The inscription thereon is thus literally taken:—

" Preieth devoutly for the sowel whome God assoile of one of the moost worshipfull knights in his days of monhode and conning Richard Beauchamp, late Earl of Warwicke, Ld Despenser of Bergavenny, and of mony greate other Ldships, whose bodie resteth here under this Tumbe in a full faire vout of stone sett on the beare Rooch, the which visited with long sikness in the Castle of Roan thereinne deceased full cristenly the last day of Aprill the yeare of our Ld God A. M. cccc.xxxix. he being at the time Lieutenant Generall and Governour of the Roialme of France and of the Dutchy of Normandy by sufficient authority of our soveraign Lord the King Harry the VI. The which body with great deliberation and full worshipfull conduct by see and by lond was brought to Warwick the iiii day of October the year abovesaid, and was leid with full solemne exequies in a feir chest made of stone in this church afore the west dore of this Chappell, according to his last will and testament therin to rest till this Chappell by him devised, in his leife were made, al the whitche Chappell, founded on the Rooch and alle the members thereof, his Executors dede fully make and apparaile by the auctority of his sede last will and testament and thereafter by the same auctoritie they did translate full worshipfully the seide bodie into the vout above saide honored be god therefore."

Round about this tomb there are fourteen statues in copper, double gilt, standing on the ends and sides of the monumenting, representing his family and near relations. To recount the many noble exploits of this man would require a treatise of itself—nay, the stories of him which still continue fresh in this town of Warwick would be very tedious; but in fine in martial prowess and great employments he exceded all his noble ancestors; and amongst the many that I have heard, take these few. He fought three severall days at Guignes in

France, in the personage of these three knights, viz. 1, the Green Kt. 2, the Chevalier vert, 3, the Chevalier attendant. Those that he fought with were, 1, le Chevalier Rouge, 2, le Chevalier Blanche, 3, Sir Collard Fines, over whom he had the better, for which he was much respected both at home and abroad.

He was sent from England with many other noble men to the council of Constance in Germany, at which time he fought a Duke and slew him in justing. King Henry the V. upon his death, appointed this Earl should have the tutelage of his son Henry VI., then an infant, till he were sixteen years of age, which the Parliament approving, he afterwards had, &c.

There be severall other large and fine monuments belonging to the family of the Nevilles, that after the Beauchamps came to be Earls of Warwick, and also many noble monuments in memory of the family of the Dudleys, who were Earls of Warwick after the extinguishment of the Nevilles.

Besides this, there is the monument of Sir Foulke Greville, which, as I am informed by the learned in the orders of building, is for its architecture inferior to none in the kingdom. The epitaph on this tomb is in my mind worth your knowing, which is this, viz. :—

> Fulke Grevil, servant to Queene
> Elizabeth, Councellour to King James, and
> *Friend to Sr Phillip Sidney.*
> Trophæum peccati

Now I will bid adieu to monuments and cast my

eye on Kenilworth, which I was so pleased with the first time, that I made another visit to its ruins as I returned from Coleshill (from whence I writ you my former letter).

This castle was first built in the time of King Henry I. by one Geoffery de Clinto; and a great pool, which was two miles long, was made at the same time. There were additional buildings and fortifications to this in every king's reign. In the 49th of Henry III. after the defeat of the Barons at the battle of Evesham, the scattered rebels fled to this place; and in the 50th of this king, he with a potent army, came in person and besieged it, which was very close, for six months, but at last he was glad to grant them their own terms.

During this siege, the sword Curtana was delivered to the king in the camp. This is allways since carried before the kings at their coronation.

Here the unfortunate King Edward II. was imprisoned in the 20th of his reign, and then deposed; here 'twas that a surrender of his regal dignity was extorted from him, and from hence he was huried to Berkley Castle, and there some time after most barbarously murdered.

Queen Elizabeth made a grant of this Castle to her beloved the Earl Leicester, who laid out on buildings and repairs upwards of 60,000*l.*

'Twas in this castle that the said Earl had the presence of Queen Elizabeth for seventeen days. The entertainment was so noble that as I am in-

formed, there was a book then writ, entituled "The Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth Castle."

This castle came afterwards to the crown, and in the late usurpation for its good service to the king, was totally demolished, so that now there remains but the ruins (which even still looks noble) of a most stately fabrick. But truly they have done one piece of service, and that is by draining the pond above mentioned, and rendering many hundreds of acres to be worth 40*s*. per acre, which before was purely matter of prospect and curiosity. This place was by King Charles II. granted to the present Earl of Rochester, with whose steward I perambulated this place.

I am afraid I have already trespass'd too long on your patience, else the describing this place, its situation, conveniences, &c. would not be amiss, but I shall conclude this letter with Kenilworth, and as you like this, you shall have more waste-paper, which shall give you my observations on Guy's Cliff, the Castle of Warwick, Cæsar's tower, and Guy's tower, cum multis aliis, &c.

I am afraid that after you have read this over (if there be any thing in it worth your knowledge,) that you will justly say it is laid under so much heavy rubbish that it's the cinder-wenches' trade to find it out. But tho' I am very well assured that it is an elaborate piece of folly, yet I hope you wo'nt expose me in this undress—for truly I am in no fit apparel to appear abroad. But, if you please, two or three

friends more may be diverted in a chamber with it, if such can affect their humours.

But to make amends for all, I here inclosed send you a true copy of my friend's speech to the corporation of Warwick, at the opening of their Charter, which I desire you keep for me again I come to town, and let none out of your family hear one word thereof. You may in some time have an account of our entertainment in the garret.

The assize begins at Warwick to-morrow morning, and in order to be there to hear the charge, &c. from Mr. Justice Clodpate, viz. Justice Ne—l, my friend and I ride thither this afternoon; we shall stay there till thursday. If there be any thing there worth your knowing, I will trouble you with it. Pray favour me with your receipt of this.

My service to all the family, and I conclude, dear Cousin,

Your very faithfull
Kinsman and most
aff^te^ humble serv^t^
till death
JOHN AT STILES.

10. Aprill. 1693

From Mr Dowdall
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Severall places in
Warwickshire.

These for
Mr Southwell
p^{r} Sent.

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